August 29, 2024 | Flash Brief

Israel, Hamas Agree to Reduce Clashes in Gaza to Enable Polio Vaccine Rollout

Latest Developments

Israel agreed to implement temporary humanitarian pauses in the fighting in Gaza to facilitate an upcoming polio vaccination campaign in the enclave. Citing a senior State Department official, *The Washington Post* **reported** on August 28 that U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken made a "major push" for the temporary pauses when he met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel last week, in a story that was **corroborated** by Israeli media outlets. However, a statement from Netanyahu's office claimed that Jerusalem did not agree to "pauses in the fighting for polio vaccinations" but rather to "designating specific areas in the Gaza Strip" for unspecified humanitarian purposes. *The Washington Post* speculated that the statement from Netanyahu's office was "designed to avoid indicating it had approved a humanitarian pause in the fighting in the absence of a ceasefire deal."

Meanwhile, Arabic media reported that Hamas agreed to a seven-day humanitarian pause to facilitate the polio vaccine rollout. Hamas spokesman Jihad Taha reportedly **told** the London-based outlet *Al-Araby Al-Jadeed* that the Iran-backed terrorist group expects all parties to follow through with the pauses. Israel cannot "evade or procrastinate and put in place alternatives by specifying places to start the vaccination process and not committing to any humanitarian truce," Taha said.

Expert Analysis

"Despite conflicting responses from Hamas and Israel, a pause in fighting to vaccinate Palestinians against polio is a just cause. However, as Hamas and its allies in Gaza have demonstrated time and again, they will exploit any opportunity afforded to them. Hamas and other terrorist groups are likely going to leverage any respite in fighting to strategize, set up ambushes, and possibly relocate hostages." — ***Joe Truzman**, Senior Research Analyst at FDD's Long War Journal*

"Israel's facilitation of humanitarian supplies and vaccines is commendable, but the only thing that will allow Gazans to begin rebuilding their lives is the surrender of Hamas and the return of Israel's hostages. Sadly, the terror organization is determined to fight this war until the bitter end, which will continue to have grave consequences for Gazan civilians." — ***Enia Krivine**, Senior Director of FDD's Israel Program and National Security Network*

Israel, UN Prepare for Polio Vaccination Campaign

The World Health Organization (WHO) first **detected** the polio virus in wastewater samples collected from Gaza in June, sparking fears of an imminent outbreak. In July, the agency **said** that the virus was "isolated" and that "no associated paralytic cases have been detected." On August 23, the WHO **confirmed** that a 10-month-old in the enclave had been paralyzed with polio — the first case of the virus in Gaza in 25 years. Two days later, more than **1.25 million** doses of the polio vaccination arrived in Gaza, where over 640,000 children are expected to be inoculated. The vaccination campaign is part of a coordinated effort between the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), the WHO, and other UN agencies.

On August 28, the Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) — an Israeli Ministry of Defense agency focused on the supply of humanitarian aid to the West Bank and Gaza — provided an update on the polio vaccination campaign, noting that cooling equipment had also been **transferred**, along with flyers to encourage the public to participate. "In the coming days, international and local medical teams will vaccinate children who have not yet been vaccinated against polio at various locations in Gaza," COGAT **noted** in a statement. Humanitarian pauses in the fighting in Gaza "will allow the population to reach the medical centers where the vaccinations will be administered," the statement added.

Israeli Efforts to Increase Clean Drinking Water in Gaza

Additionally, on July 2, Israel **connected** a power line to a main desalination plant in Gaza to boost the supply of clean drinking water to the strip. A statement issued by COGAT said that the plant, located in the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis, was directly connected to the Israeli grid and would be managed by UNICEF. "The increase in [the] supply of water is a further step taken to support humanitarian efforts for Gazan residents, and to prevent contamination and outbreaks of disease during the summer months," the COGAT statement announced.

Related Analysis

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